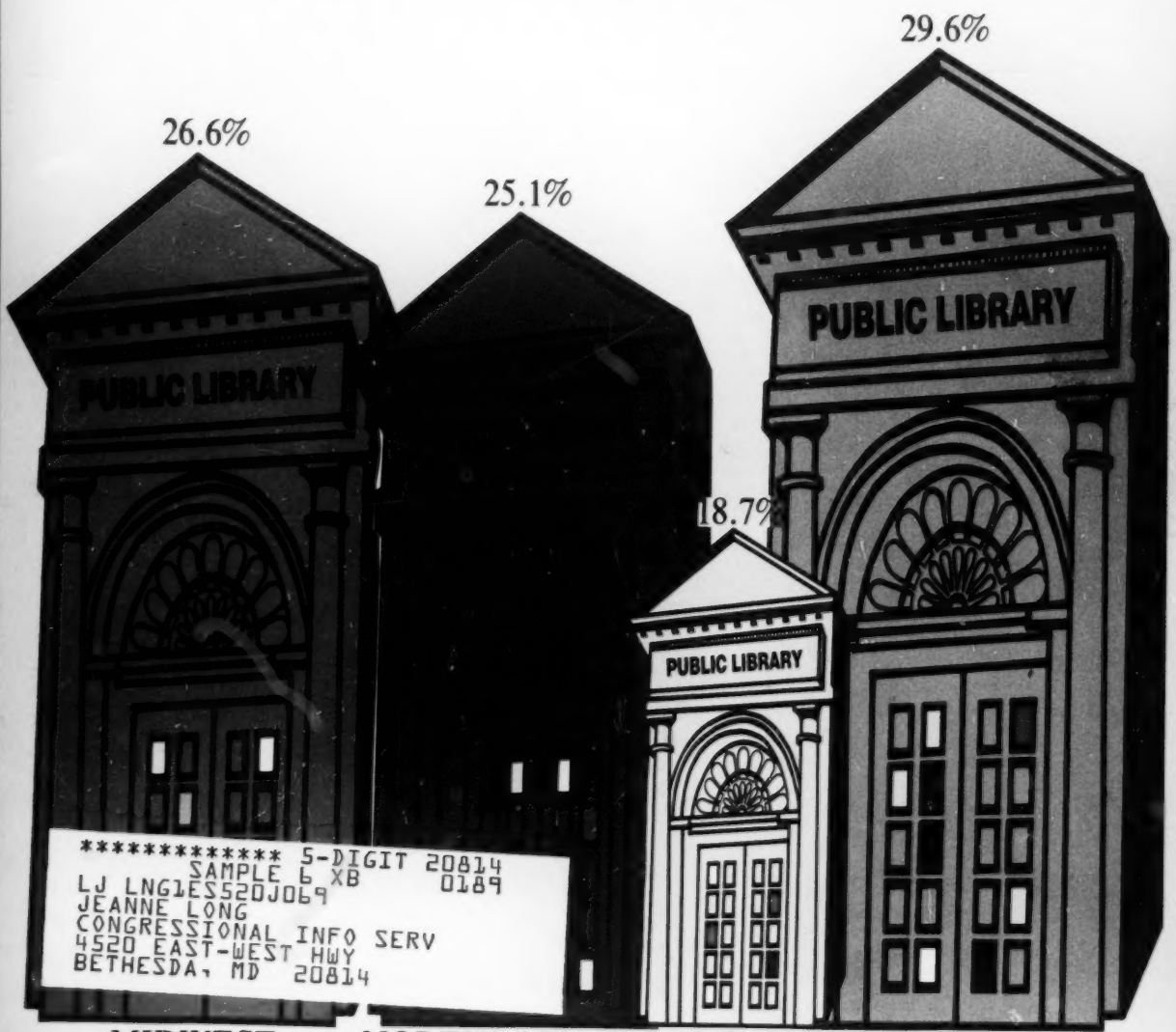
6/17/88 C1852-1

LIBRARY JOURNAL®

JUNE 15, 1988

A CAHNERS/R. R. BOWKER PUBLICATION

Librarians and the "Dismal Science"
Confessions of a Grantsperson
Public Library Referenda 1987
THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR LIBRARIES



VOL. 113 No. 11

LIBRARY JOURNAL

June 15, 1988

ISSN 0363-0277

Revenues and expenses for public libraries were up in 1987, and growth in both areas can be expected in the future. Is this a call for optimism or opportunism? See "The Economic Outlook for Libraries," page 18. Cover by Gilbert Fletcher

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LIBRARY JOURNAL is published by Bowker Magazine Group, Cahners Magazine Division, Terrence M. McDermott, President; Carroll V. Dowden, Group Vice President; Jerry D. Neth, Vice President/Publishing Operations; J. J. Walsh, Financial Vice President/Magazine Division; Thomas J. Dellamaria, Vice President/Production & Manufacturing. Copyright © 1988 by Reed Publishing, USA; Saul Goldweitz, Chairman; Ronald G. Segel, President/CEO; Robert L. Krakoff, Executive Vice President; William M. Platt, Sr. Vice President. Direct editorial and advertising correspondence to 249 West 17th Street, New York, NY 10011. Telephone: 212-463-6819. Subscription inquiries and changes of address should be directed to Library Journal, PO Box 1977, Marion, OH 43305-1977. Telephone: 1-800-431-1713; in OH: 1-614-383-3141. Issued 20 times a year, twice a month, February through June and September through November, and once a month in January, July, August, and December. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Cahners Publishing Company, A Division of Reed Publishing USA ☐ Specialized Business Magazines for Building & Construction, Manufacturing, Foodservice & Lodging, Electronics & Computers, Interior Design, Printing, Publishing, Industrial Research & Technology, Health Care, and Entertainment. ☐ Specialized Consumer Magazines: *American Baby* and *Modern Bride*.

LIBRARY JOURNAL is indexed in *Educational Index, Library Literature, Library & Information Science Abstracts,* and *Magazine Index*. SUBSCRIPTIONS: USA: 1 year $69; 2 years, $117; 3 years, $164. Canada: 1 year $94, 2 years $160, 3 years $224. All other countries (surface delivery): 1 year $100. All other countries (air delivery): 1 year $125, 2 years $213, 3 years $299. (Remit in US funds only.) Single copy, $5.00. Spring & Fall Announcement Issues, $6.95. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to *Library Journal*, P.O. Box 1977, Marion, OH 43305-1977.

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Another year of economic growth will spur increases in both funding and costs for public libraries

The Economic Outlook for Libraries

By Jane Dietzel

THE ECONOMY will remain healthy throughout 1988, and will have a positive effect on funding for the nation's public libraries. The single most important phenomenon affecting the performance of the U.S. economy in 1988 is not last October's stock market crash, but the slow and steady decline in the value of the dollar that has taken place since 1985.

Since New York is the home of the communications industry as well as Wall Street, the crash grabbed most of the headlines, but its effects have not been widely felt in other parts of the country. The weaker dollar has had a much broader impact on many sectors, and will be the main force behind the economy's continued strength in 1988. The side effect of the weaker dollar is higher prices for imported goods and industrial materials, which will send general inflation and library costs up more quickly in the next year.

A robust economy

Cahners Economics forecasts that the real, inflation-adjusted GNP will rise 2.8 percent this year, before slowing to 0.7 percent in 1989 (Figure 1). After the crash, gloomy economists predicted that sharp declines in consumer expenditures and business investment would create huge inventory pile-ups, reductions in manufacturing output, and a recession in the first half of the year.

The latest data, however, show that the economy remains robust. GNP growth for the first quarter of the year is estimated to have been a moderate 2.3 percent, but the sources of the increase point to underlying strength that will carry through the rest of the year. Consumers have maintained moderately good spending levels, especially for cars and other durable goods, and business expenditures are rising. The manufacturing sector has seen a dramatic improvement in its trade deficit, since the weaker dollar has made U.S. goods more competitive in both U.S. and foreign markets.

Proposed federal library cuts

Another year of economic growth provides federal, state, and local governments with the revenues enabling them to increase library funding, provided that libraries receive their established budget priority. Historically, the responsibility for library support, along with the nation's education needs, has rested with state and local governments and the private sector.

While the Reagan administration continues to support the complete elimination of federal aid to libraries, asserting that the goal of making library services available to virtually every community has been achieved, its FY 1989 budget includes the first request for library funds in six years. The proposal calls for a total of $76 million to be spent on new programs for services to the disadvantaged, resource sharing, as well as research and assessment. Traditional programs, which received $135.1 million for FY 1988, would be left unfunded under the plan. The administration also proposes that federal aid to state and local

Table A: Expenditures by Public Libraries (millions of $)

Expenditures	1986	1987
Books	$432.24	$504.65
Periodicals	64.75	76.34
Other print materials	6.74	7.72
Manuscripts & archives	0.25	0.28
AV materials	39.46	47.32
AV equipment	3.50	5.85
Microform	9.43	12.46
Computer materials	1.50	2.09
Computer fees	6.31	9.67
Preservation	9.12	9.39
Unspecified	50.76	20.11
Total	**$624.06**	**$695.88**

Source: *American Library Directory*/Cahners Economics

Jane Dietzel is an Economist, Cahners Publishing, Newton, Massachusetts

"The side effect of the weaker dollar is higher prices for imported goods and industrial materials"

FIGURE 1

governments for libraries be reduced to $121.6 million in FY 1989 from its current $149.5 billion level.

During the first half of the year, when the economic outlook appeared bleakest, most analysts believed that the Congress would swallow the president's budget and make few major additions for fear of triggering Gramm-Rudman-Hollings cuts. Now that most economists are busy raising their forecasts, the Democratic Congress is more likely to insist on election-year funding for the popular library programs.

Regional patterns in state spending

Most state budgets are in much better shape than they were a year ago. Overall revenues rose 6.8 percent in 1986, and an estimated 6.5 percent in 1987. State spending for libraries rose to $548.5 million in 1986 (the latest year for which we have complete data), or $2.28 per capita, but spending levels varied widely from state to state. Spending per person was highest in states with small or sparse populations—Alaska ($15.52), Hawaii ($12.81)—but on a regional basis, per capita spending levels are much more closely linked to recent economic performance (Figure 2).

Average per capita state spending for libraries was strongest in the Northeast, where the service-oriented economy has seen strong growth in the past few years. Employment, consumer spending, and output remain strong in the New England states and most of the Middle Atlantic region. Spending was strongest in New York ($4.38) and Rhode Island ($4.27), and weakest in New Hampshire ($1.95).

Spending was weaker in the West and the South, where more local economies are dependent on the agricultural and mining industries. Spending was strong in the coastal regions ($2.75 in the South Atlantic, $2.33 in the Pacific Southwest), but very weak in the Southwest and Mountain regions. The lowest per capita spending levels for both the region and the whole United States in 1986 were seen in Louisiana (78¢).

Spending was weakest in the Midwest, where local economies were flattened in 1986 by the farm crisis and that year's weakness in the manufacturing sector. Per capita spending was weakest in Ohio (83¢), Indiana ($1.16), and Minnesota ($1.02).

State library aid in 1988

A great deal of this regional variation will be ironed out in 1988 and 1989 by a shift in relative regional performance. Largely as a result of the decline in the value of the dollar, areas with manufacturing-based economies—sections of the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and East South Central (Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi)—will see the strongest employment growth and the healthiest increases in consumer and business spending.

Conversely, growth in the service-oriented regions—New England, parts of the Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and Pacific Southwest—will weaken in 1988 as spot labor shortages, financial market instability, overbuilding of commercial structures, and deepening service-sector consolidation dampen the expansion.

Economic performance in the remaining regions will be mixed. Renewed strength in agriculture has boosted the economies of the farm states. Rising prices for farm products and land, as well as very strong demand worldwide for beef and grains should make 1988 the best year for farmers in over a decade.

In the oil states, a recent escalation in drilling activity has spurred sales of oil field equipment and other energy-related goods, but any downward pressure on oil prices would quickly reverse this trend. The rate of economic recovery in the Southwest will vary with the concentration of direct energy-related employment in the area, and future growth depends on the prosperity of high-tech industries and on the stabilization of local finances.

Looking at state library expenditures relative to total state spending levels gives and indication of the priority placed on libraries relative to other state programs. By this measure, spending is again strongest in Alaska, Hawaii, and in the Northeast region, where states spent an average of $1.76 on libraries for every $1000 of total state expenditures. New York leads the country in this category, spending $2.14. The West was the weakest, as Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon, and California brought down the average.

Rising costs and salaries

The continued strength of the economy means that libraries' operating costs are likely to rise more quickly in 1988 and 1989. Salaries and wages, which make up the biggest chunk of the average library's total expenses, are likely to rise a little more slowly than they have in the past few years, but price increases for library materials will continue to accelerate.

Average starting salaries for professional librarians will continue to rise at their established rate of five to six percent per year. Increases are likely to be stronger in specialties for which demand is very high, including children's and young adult librarians and those with backgrounds in technical services. In large metropolitan areas, demand is higher both for people with liberal arts skills and for those with a library background.

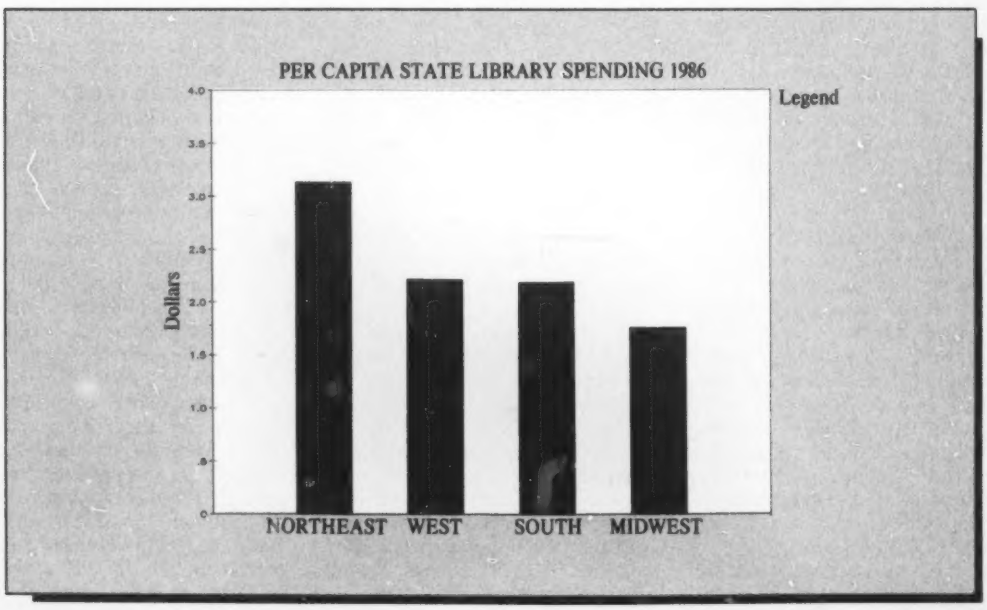
Growth in wages and salaries for nonprofessional staff members is likely to be slower in the next two years than it has been in the recent past, except in areas where technical and clerical workers are in extremely short supply. The slowing of growth and productivity in the service sector will cause average wages for white collar workers to rise by about three percent in the next two years, after posting gains of 4.4 percent in 1986 and 3.5 percent in 1987. Employment costs will rise most quickly in the Northeast, where the labor market has been stretched thin by a decade of strong employment growth and slow increase in the teenage population, and in the Midwest, where the manufacturing industries are rebounding.

Materials costs: higher faster

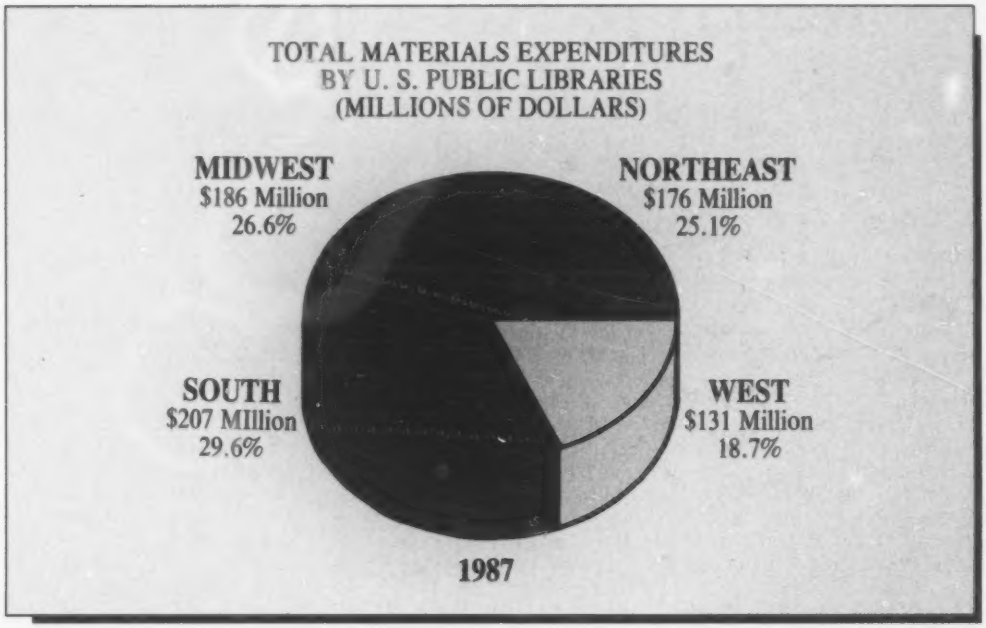
Prices for library materials have risen sharply in the past few years, and have in many cases outstripped the increases in materials budgets intended to cover inflation. The Consumer Price Index (CPI), which many libraries use in their budget requests as an indication of general inflation, has risen very slowly in the past two years thanks to a weakness in food and energy prices.

Materials expenditures by public libraries totaled just under $696 million in 1987, according to survey data compiled for the 1987 edition of the *American Library Directory* (Figure 3). Spending was up 9.7 percent from the 1986 level of $624 million. Almost one-third of this money—$207 million—was spent by public libraries in

"The administration also proposes that federal aid to state and local governments for libraries be reduced . . . in FY 1989"



"The rate of economic recovery in the Southwest will vary with the concentration of direct energy-related employment"



the Southern region which encompasses only 19 percent of the nation's public libraries. Expenditures by Midwestern and Northeastern libraries, with totals of $186 million and $176 million respectively, made up another one quarter of the total each. Spending by Western libraries trailed with a total of $131 million. On a per capita basis, however, the pattern is much more familiar. Materials spending is highest in the Northeast ($3.52 per person) and Midwest ($3.14), and much lower in the South ($2.49) and West ($2.68).

Periodical and book price increases

Publishers' prices for most types of books rose more quickly in 1987 than they had in the previous five years, according to data from the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. After rising 4.6 percent in 1985 and 4.8 percent in 1986, prices for all books rose a stronger five percent last year. Children's books showed the sharpest increases in 1987, jumping ten percent, after averaging only 4.5 percent during the 1982–1987 period.

Price increases for adult trade paperbacks, religious books, and mass market paperbacks all accelerated in 1987. Prices for textbooks and technical, scientific, and professional books moderated in 1987. In 1987, public libraries spent $504.7 million or 72.5 percent of their acquisitions budgets for books (Table A).

Publishers' prices for domestic periodicals rose 4.2 percent in 1987, but the average rate of increase in the past five years was twice as fast. In the first quarter of 1988, prices rose another 3.8 percent, indicating that prices have resumed a stronger upward trend.

Foreign subscription prices have risen even faster as a result of the falling dollar. While the response of many librarians has been to cancel subscriptions, most are devoting a higher proportion of their acquisitions budgets to periodicals. In 1987, public library spending for periodicals totaled an estimated $76 million, or about 11 percent of total materials expenditures. This is up 17.9 percent from the 1986 figure of $65 million, which represented only 10.4 percent of total expenditures.

Rising manufacturing costs, which were chiefly responsible for the increases in publishers' prices last year, are expected to accelerate this year. First, the lower value of the dollar has boosted the cost U.S. publishers must bear to have their books produced overseas. Offshore production, with the strong dollar and lower foreign labor rates, had been undertaken in order to reduce costs. Second, paper prices have risen sharply in the past year, as demand from the packaging sector as well as the publishing industry has exhausted current supply.

In general, library budgets and costs will continue to grow apace, with relatively good news for salaried and wage-earning library workers. But those who buy materials for libraries (particularly foreign journals) will have to be more selective as increasing costs of paper, manufacturing, and the dollar exchange drive book and magazine prices higher. The economic outlook for libraries in FY 1988–89 is grounds for guarded optimism, and a sigh of relief that ups and downs on Wall Street had less impact than expected on the rest of the country and on public revenues and budgets.

New data on library referenda for capital improvement projects indicate that libraries are a big hit with voters

Referenda for Public Library Buildings 1987

By Richard B. Hall

IN REVIEWING the literature regarding the use of the public referenda to finance public library buildings, it soon becomes obvious that there has never been a serious attempt to document the activity annually or to systematically compare campaigns and analyze the reasons for success or failure. In an attempt to fill this void, *LJ* and the author began an attempt to collect data on local referenda held for public library buildings. For the data to be included in this report, the referenda must have been held between July 1, 1986 and June 30, 1987.

Through the cooperation of state library agencies and public library directors throughout the country, 54 public library capital improvement referenda were reported. Of these, 50 campaigns were successful (93 percent) compared to only four defeats (seven percent). It is obvious that this data represent only a sample of the complete picture, and, unfortunately, there is no way to tell how many referenda were held and not reported. It is a fair assumption to state that the actual success rate is less than 90 percent. Naturally, there is some hesitancy on the part of those who have not been successful to report their misfortune to the world. Those four libraries brave enough to report their loss can provide the profession with some valuable lessons.

Richard B. Hall is *Library Building* Consultant, State Library of Georgia, Atlanta

Some initial findings

The results of the data collection are interesting when viewed together as well as separately. While there are many temptations to draw conclusions from the results, it is very risky to make statements based on only one year's data. With this disclaimer in mind, an attempt will be made to uncover generalities in the results, but definite conclusions and trends will have to wait until more data is collected and analyzed over several years.

One of the most interesting findings emerges when the 1987 data are averaged and the percentages of votes for and against all the referenda are compared. Nationally, on average, the figures show a better than two to one percentage in favor of passage of all the referenda. This is an extremely encouraging development for those libraries considering a capital improvement referendum. However, this very positive prospect for success must be tempered with the realization that every year is a new year and that each referendum must be fought and won on the merits of the individual situation.

It is important to note that of the approximately $242 million reported as attempted, $224 million of capital improvements for public libraries were approved in local referenda by the voters. The five largest referenda (Columbus, Ohio; Decatur, Ga.; West Palm Beach, Fla.; Baton Rouge, La; New Port Richey, Fla.) raised $116 million, accounting for over 50 percent of the $224 million. As these funds begin to appear in the *LJ* architectural issue construction statistics, it is likely that the recent trend toward increased local funding for new buildings will continue.

The type of referenda

It is no surprise that the majority of the referenda held for public library capital improvements were to be financed with city and county general obligation (GO) bonds. A closer analysis of the data reveals some interesting facts. The agencies authorizing the referenda fell into the following categories and percentages:

city—40 percent
county—26 percent
school dis[illegible]—17 percent
"town"—[illegible] percent
parish—two percent

Surprisingly, municipalities authorized 40 percent of the referenda. If the New England "towns" are included, the rate rises to 55 percent. A higher authorization rate by county governments was anticipated. It is interesting to note that school districts were the authorizing agencies as often as they were.

Bond issues were the most popular type of referendum. Eighty percent of the referenda fell into this category with the remainder being distributed among approaches such as sales taxes, property tax millage rate increases, and even mortgages. Of the referenda that resulted in bond issues, 95 percent were for GO bonds with the remainder using either revenue or serial bonds.

The effect of other items being on the same ballot with a library building has always been a controversial issue. Of the referenda held in 1987, two-thirds had other items such as water, sewer, streets, schools, etc., on the same ballot. The success rate of those on the ballot alone was 95 percent, while the success rate for those with competing items on the ballot was 92 percent. Many would have predicted the higher success rate for those referenda without com-

peting ballot items, but few would have thought the difference would be as little as three percent.

Slightly over two-thirds of the referenda were held during a regularly scheduled general election, with the remaining one-third held as special referenda. Of those held during general elections, 92 percent were successful. Referenda held during special elections had a slightly higher success rate of 94 percent. Again, the similarity is surprising. While the difference between the success rates of general and special elections bears observation in upcoming years, it would be premature to draw any conclusions at this time.

There has often been speculation regarding which month of the year is best to hold a library referendum. Since this sample is so small, the current data demonstrates little to answer this question definitively, but it does indicate a preference toward spring and fall. Those scheduled between March and July had an 87 percent success rate, while 97 percent of the referenda scheduled from September to January were successful.

Campaign methods

In reporting their data, library directors were asked to quantify "the relative importance to your campaign" of various specific campaign methods. A scale from one to ten was used, with ten indicating the most important and one the least. Table 3 shows, in priority order, the average response for all 54 library referenda to each campaign method.

The most commonly used campaign method was the creation and distribution of pamphlets and fact sheets. Explaining the library's position on the issue is a simple, effective, and relatively inexpensive way to communicate with the voters. Judging from the samples sent, professional graphic layout services were often used to create a favorable impression of the library. Exterior elevations and floor plans of the proposed new building highlighting new or improved services were often presented as well. The project budget with the resulting cost per household, or a similar comparison, was frequently included along with varying justifications of the need for the improvements.

Of the three main media, the use of print was by far the most frequent. The use of feature articles and even an occasional advertisement was frequently employed to "sell the library's story." A feature article in the Sunday paper on the eve of the referendum was a highly desirable tool that worked as a last-minute appeal to bring out supporters to vote. Press releases were also considered important and were often used to dispel inaccurate information, rebut false rumors about the referendum, or highlight an important event in the campaign, e.g., an endorsement. Further, letters to the editor or editorials were often used to discuss the need for a new or improved building.

Endorsements by influential community leaders were considered to be effective in influencing voters, as was the activity of making presentations before local community groups. Getting to these community leaders and obtaining their approval of the campaign was perceived as very significant for improving the chances of success. Further, the participation of a library Friends group in numerous activities was considered essential in many cases. The Friends group can be a very effective way of organizing volunteer activities: telephone contact of library users and registered voters; mass mailings; participation in public forums explaining the library's point of view.

It should be pointed out that many of the methods in the less frequently used categories in Table 3 are also some of the more expensive ones: producing TV and radio spots; getting air time unless public service announcements can be arranged; hiring a public relations consultant; or contracting for a prevote poll or survey of voters. In spite of the cost and the overall low ranking, these methods were considered very important in several campaigns.

For example, the use of a preliminary poll can actually be a very cost-effective tool to "test the waters" before committing to the expense of a full-fledged campaign. This approach was used effectively in the Marietta, Georgia campaign where a voter survey was instrumental in building confidence with local officials regarding the chance of success. In communities where funding agencies or even library boards need some convincing in order to get the library issue on the ballot, this approach may prove invaluable.

It is surprising that the participation of the Chamber of Commerce and private business in general was as low in importance as it was. It is possible that these agencies were felt to have been addressed through public forums and presentations to community groups, but, surprisingly, the involvement of the private sector was not perceived to be of great importance in most cases. In those instances where it was important, it is likely that there were private fundraising campaigns in progress as well to supplement the public referenda.

Why success, why failure?

A part of the data collection form asked library directors to "assess the relative significance of various items to the success or failure of the referendum." Table 4 shows, in priority order, the average of all of the responses.

The most commonly cited reason given for the result of the referendum was the need for the new or improved building. It is encouraging to know that when the need is there and obvious to all, the desired result will frequently follow. This, of course, assumes that the need has been effectively explained and that there is not another overriding consideration or conflict that disrupts the process.

It is also encouraging to see that the quality of previous library service is perceived as an important factor in determining the result of the referendum. This demonstrates that working hard to satisfy consumers will be rewarded by a public mandate for improved physical facilities. This result certainly provides an incentive to library staff and management to do as good a job of providing quality service as possible regardless of the existing conditions.

Another important factor in determining the outcome of the referendum was the effect of the public relations efforts on behalf of the library. Obviously, it was perceived that all of the public relations–related campaign methods used—pamphlets, fact sheets, newspaper copy, press releases, etc.—were effective in influencing the final vote. There is much that a library can do for its own campaign if management is willing to allocate the time and energy required to create professional-quality products.

Library administrators who planned campaign strategies effectively, organized their people, and used their links with the community at large through a Friends group and the Board of Trustees found that success was within their grasp. The use of endorsements by community leaders was also perceived to be an important way of reaching the voters.

It is interesting to note that the educational level of the community was perceived to be of greater importance than the socioeconomic level or even the economic climate at the time of the referendum. If the significance of the educational level of a commu-

Table 1
Referenda for Public Library Buildings 1987

Community	Library	Vote		Amount of Referendum	General Special	Other Ballot Items
		For	Against			
ARIZONA						
Glendale	Glendale PL	56%	44%	$9,698,000	S	Y
COLORADO						
Steamboat Springs	Bud Werner Memorial Lib.	67	33	575,000	S	N
CONNECTICUT						
Anonymous	Anonymous	86	14	350,000	S	N
Harwinton	T.A. Hungerford Memorial Lib.	51	49	855,000	S	Y
FLORIDA						
New Port Richey	Pasco County Lib.	52	48	10,000,000	G	Y
West Palm Beach	Palm Beach County Lib.	67	33	20,000,000	G	Y
GEORGIA						
Decatur	DeKalb County PL	67	33	29,000,000	G	Y
Marietta	Cobb County PL	71	29	7,160,000	G	Y
Sparta	Hancock County PL	99	1	735,000	S	N
ILLINOIS						
Palos Heights	Palos Heights PL	54	46	639,000	G	Y
St. Charles	St. Charles PL	68	32	2,925,000	G	Y
Taylorville	Taylorville PL	55	45	300,000	G	Y
LOUISIANA						
Baton Rouge	East Baton Rouge Parish Lib.	67	33	12,000,000	G	Y
* Natchitoches	Natchitoches Parish Lib.	38	62	6,280,000	G	Y
New Orleans	New Orleans PL	68	32	1,600,000	S	Y
MARYLAND						
Hyattsville	Prince George's Cty. Mem. Lib.	8[illegible]	18	3,600,000	G	Y
Towson	Baltimore County PL	7[illegible]	29	500,000	G	Y
MASSACHUSETTS						
Eastham	Eastham PL	97	3	663,665	G	Y
Lincoln	Lincoln PL	95	5	2,250,000	S	Y
Littleton	Rueben Hoar Lib.	75	25	1,200,000	S	Y
* Plymouth	Plymouth PL	49	51	9,725,000	G	Y
Southborough	Southborough Lib.	62	38	1,300,000	S	N
Sterling	Conant PL	82	18	890,000	G	N
Wayland	Wayland PL	100	0	200,000	G	Y
West Newbury	G.A.R. Memorial Lib.	93	7	850,000	G	Y
Westford	J.V. Fletcher Lib.	80	20	2,280,000	G	Y
MINNESOTA						
Forest Lake	Forest Lake PL	59	41	298,000	G	Y
NEW YORK						
Brentwood	Brentwood PL	76	24	7,980,000	S	N
Center Moriches	Center Moriches Free PL	54	46	1,800,000	S	N
Eden	Eden Free Lib.	100	0	250,000	G	N
Marlboro	Marlboro Free Lib.	80	20	249,000	S	N
Middle Island	Longwood PL	87	13	3,900,000	G	Y
Montauk	Montauk Lib.	65	35	985,000	S	N
Spring Valley	Finkelstein Memorial Lib.	73	27	3,000,000	S	N
Yorktown	John C. Hart Memorial Lib.	81	19	2,000,000	S	N
NORTH CAROLINA						
Chapel Hill	Chapel Hill PL	77	23	4,000,000	G	Y
NORTH DAKOTA						
Bismarck	Bismarck Veterans Memorial PL	73	27	3,400,000	G	Y
OHIO						
* Anonymous	Anonymous	35	65	1,200,000	G	Y
Berea	Cuyahoga County PL	67	33	1,500,000	G	N
Columbus	Grandview Heights PL	66	34	4,460,000	G	Y
Columbus	PL of Columbus & Franklin Cty.	53	47	45,000,000	G	Y
Fremont	Birchard PL of Sandusky Cty.	56	44	3,600,000	G	N
Lebanon	Lebanon PL	65	35	1,350,000	G	N
Parma Heights	Cuyahoga County PL	57	43	1,000,000	G	N
Waynesville	Mary L. Cook PL	52	48	550,000	G	Y

Table 1 (continued)
Referenda for Public Library Buildings 1987

Community	Library	Vote For	Vote Against	Amount of Referendum	General Special	Other Ballot Items
OREGON						
North Bend	North Bend PL	67%	33%	$1,650,000	G	Y
Portland	Multnomah County Lib.	60	40	5,890,000	G	Y
West Linn	West Linn PL	64	36	1,200,000	G	Y
Wilsonville	Wilsonville PL	56	44	2,250,000	S	Y
RHODE ISLAND						
South Kingstown	South Kingstown PL	73	27	750,000	G	Y
SOUTH CAROLINA						
Charleston	Charleston County Lib.	76	24	15,465,234	G	N
TEXAS						
* Universal City	Universal City Lib.	29	71	750,000	S	N
WASHINGTON						
Cheney	Cheney Community Lib.	79	21	275,000	G	Y
TOTALS		69%	31%	$241,927,899	S 31% G 69%	Y 67% N 33%

* Referenda that failed

nity continues to maintain prominence over other factors in future years as more data is collected, it will have an important impact on planning campaign strategy for future referenda. It should be acknowledged that this year's data was collected during a period of relative prosperity, and, as a result, the importance of the economic climate and the socioeconomic level of the community may take on greater importance in future years if there is economic decline.

Just in time

It is difficult to say what went into the consideration of when the right time to hold the referendum was, but the presumption is that the date for the referendum should be carefully chosen by those informed about the political and economic climate of the community. With this in mind, the library administrator must be aware that the political pundits in some communities may never think that the time is right for the library issue. If this is the case, the library board may have to try to assess their chances on their own and commit to a campaign on the basis of their own knowledge of their constituency.

It is important to present the building's design, cost, and location in a favorable light with a minimum of controversy. Obviously, if the voters feel that the building is one that they, as a community, will feel proud of and one that is not overly expensive or located on an objectionable site, the chances for success are greatly improved. If any one of these items regarding the building project is poorly handled, it alone can mean the defeat of the campaign.

A taxing situation

Several surprises come from the remaining categories. The first is the issue of increased taxation, which traditionally is used by opponents as the main reason not to finance new capital improvements. While not showing as significant in the referenda that passed, it consistently scored in the highest category for the four referenda that failed.

Few taxpayers are excited about seeing their tax bills increase, but if they perceive that the tax increase is not really needed, or that previous funds have been wasted, then the chances of getting a positive result at the polls is significantly diminished. On the other hand, if the need is well justified and the issue touches the taxpayer directly so that they can see some personal benefit in the expenditure, then the chances for success are greatly improved. Obviously, timing with respect to this issue is critical. Referenda put before the voters just after an increase in taxes due to a property reappraisal or operating budget deficit are at a disadvantage at the outset.

Given the potential dire consequences, this issue of taxation must be thoughtfully addressed before and during the campaign. In particular, there must be careful consideration on the part of library administrators and boards who live in communities where this issue is paramount in the minds of voters. To misjudge the relevance of increased taxation in these communities is a guaranteed prescription for failure no matter how much the library needs a new facility or how sophisticated the campaign methods.

Table 2
Referenda Pass/Fail Ratio by Month

Month	Passed	Failed
January	1	0
February	0	0
March	5	0
April	2	1
May	8	1
June	4	1
July	1	0
August	0	0
September	2	0
October	2	0
November	21	1
December	4	0
Total	**50**	**4**

Another surprise in the rankings was that organized opposition scored dead last overall. There usually is not a large number of people in the community who feel so negative toward the library or its capital improvement needs to work to defeat a referendum. But a word of caution: this category was rated very high as a reason for failure by three out of four library directors reporting unsuccessful referenda. It should be recognized that the most prevalent opposition groups are frequently those opposed to tax increases. If a campaign does face well-organized opposition, the chances of success are lower, and a good portion of the campaign strategy sessions will need to be directed toward trying to defuse, circumvent, or overcome the opposition.

Table 4
Significance for Success/Failure of Campaign

Item	Avg. Ranking
Need for new/improved buildings	8.86
Quality of library service in the past	7.87
Public relations efforts	7.86
Activity of Friends group/library board	7.02
Campaign organization efforts	6.80
Educational level of community	6.50
Endorsements by community leaders	6.32
Timing of vote	6.29
Socioeconomic level of community	5.96
Economic climate	5.89
Building design, cost of location	5.65
Increase in taxation	3.74
Involvement of the business community	2.91
Competing item on ballot	2.50
Organized opposition	1.99

Old-fashioned competition

Contrary to popular belief, competing items on the ballot were not perceived by most library directors to be a great detriment to the chances of success. However, of those library directors reporting unsuccessful referenda, half thought competing items on the ballot were of little importance and half thought that they were a significant factor. The jury is still out on this until more data can be collected, but in the case of one campaign, it was strongly felt that if there had not been any competition, the library would have won instead of having been narrowly defeated. A similiar situation was found regarding the importance of the involvement of the business community. In most campaigns, the involvement of the business community was not considered to be very important, but in two out of four that failed, it was considered significant.

Categories that most library directors did not find very significant to their campaigns still contain pitfalls that must be carefully avoided if success is to be assured. Nothing can be taken for granted—the price of success is constant vigilance. No factor, no matter how small or seemingly unimportant, can be left to chance without running the risk of failure.

Table 3
Ranked Importance of Campaign Methods

Campaign Method	Avg. Ranking
Pamphlets, fact sheets, bookmarks, etc.	8.35
Newpaper ads, feature articles	7.30
Endorsements by community leaders	7.07
Press releases	6.78
Community group presentations	6.33
Letters to the editor, editorials	6.15
Library Friends group	6.04
Volunteers' telephone contact	5.05
Public forums	4.61
AV (slide or videotape) presentations	3.00
Use of previous precinct voting records	2.99
Radio spots	2.98
Chamber of commerce participation	2.43
Yard signs	2.28
Organized door to door contact	2.24
Private business participation	2.24
Television spots	1.59
Public relations firm or consultant	1.12
Pre-vote poll of registered voters	.98

Pertinent commentary

Several items were mentioned in the "comments" section of the data form. Some library directors felt that these items were significant, at least for their campaigns. The first is the positive impact that potential matching state or federal funds had or would have had if they were available. Several library directors viewed this as an important stimulus and potential reason for improving the chances for the success of their referendum. In addition, numerous directors commented that the success of their campaign was the result of many years of groundwork by many dedicated people, implying that their success was not something that had happened overnight.

It must be stated that while the effort to pass a referendum is no small one, the chances of success are encouraging. The positive results of this year's data are in keeping with the findings of Herbert Goldhor, recently retired director of the Library Research Center of the University of Illinois. Goldhor reported that over two-thirds of the library bond issues held in Illinois from 1980–85 were successful. This figure is further supported in his unpublished national survey of *Public Library Referenda in 1985*, which indicated that approximately two-thirds of all local bond issues held in 1985 were successful in the states participating in the survey.

Based on these results and this year's data, it is hoped that library administrators and boards of trustees who have seen the degree of success reported by many of their counterparts will be encouraged to attempt capital improvement campaigns in their own communities.